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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study summarized here was to determine the extent of the efforts of community education programs to establish an effective, democratic problem-solving process among the citizenry of their communities. Questionnaires were collected from 215 school districts. The instrument was a 36-item questionnaire mailed to respondents. Results indicated a significant correlation between programs with a process orientation and the presence of a full-time coordinator. Community initiated programs had a stronger process orientation than did those initiated by the school district. There was no correlation between population size and process orientation, but those with more sites were more process oriented. Programs started before 1968 or after 1972 were generally more process oriented than those started between 1969 and 1972. Other findings concerned the coordinator's philosophy, school district expenditures, program budget, type of programs, and advisory council philosophy. The document suggests further studies investigating the reasons for the correlation between process orientation and time of program inception, number of school sites, coordinator philosophy, advisory councils, and years of program operation. (Author/JM)

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# COMMUNITY EDUCATION: PROGRAM OR PROCESS?
# A SURVEY OF SELECTED COMMUNITY SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES

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## FOREWORD

This study is the second issue of Research Reports on Educational Administration in this its eighth volume year. First published in 1971, R.R.E.A. has brought current and concise research to the desks of Arizona school administrators. The current issue is the thirty-seventh in the continuing series.

Each year, topics which may be of greatest current interest to administrators in Arizona are identified from among the doctoral dissertations produced by the Department of Educational Administration and Supervision at Arizona State University. These topics are then summarized and appear in Research Reports on Educational Administration.

A list of titles in this series which are available from the Bureau of Educational Research and Services is included on the inside back cover. All dissertations from which the summaries are derived are available on interlibrary loan and may be obtained from any library upon application to the Director of Libraries, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85281. They are also available on microfilm from Xerox University Microfilm, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

The dissertation by Donald S. Udell sought to determine the extent to which community education programs were making an attempt to establish an effective democratic problem-solving process among the citizenry of their communities.

The study was of the survey type, with the population consisting of 438 Community Education programs in operation for more than one year and appearing in the 1975-75 Annual Report of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Recommendations and implications for educators were included in addition to the findings of the study.

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# COMMUNITY EDUCATION: PROGRAM OR PROCESS?

## A SURVEY OF SELECTED COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

## THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES

## INTRODUCTION

The community education concept has received much attention across the United States during the past several years. Over 800 school districts in the nation have designated their schools as community schools. In Arizona over 100 schools representing over thirty districts have some type of community education program in operation. Although many districts seem to use the term, "community schools," there appear to be differing goals and expectations of these endeavors. Some districts offer only after-school and evening enrichment activities and classes for youth and adults. Others add recreational opportunities at the local schools to help cut down on vandalism and crime. Still others work closely with social and governmental groups to help local communities develop a process by which they can identify and solve their local problems and investigate their concerns. Some of these school districts employ highly trained professional community educators and allocate adequate sums of money for operation while others focus on local citizens to develop and implement Community Education as best they can on a part-time basis. Because of this great diversity in scope in various community schools, it has become very difficult to determine the products of Community Education. Is Community Education a set of activities for youth and adults? Or is Community Education a more far-reaching concept that enables individuals in a community to collectively identify problems and systematically solve them with local resources? Is Community Education a Program or a Process?

## THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which community education programs were engaged in efforts to establish an effective democratic problem-solving process among the citizenry of their communities. Specifically, this study investigated the extent to which the activities of the programs in operation for more than one year and reported in the 1974-75 Annual Report compiled by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation conformed to the kind of activities judged necessary for the development of effective community organization for solving local problems. Nine hypotheses were stated:

$H_1$ Programs which are directed by a full-time rather than a less than full-time coordinator will be more process-oriented.

$H_2$ Programs which are initiated by community residents rather than by the school district will be more process-oriented.

$H_3$ The smaller the population of the areas being served by a community education program, the more process-oriented the program will be.

$H_4$ The longer the period of time a community education program has been operating, the more process-oriented that program will be.

$H_5$ The greater the number of schools within a district which have a Community Education program, the more process-oriented that district's Community Education program will be.

$H_6$ The more the personal philosophy of the Community Education coordinator is supportive of a process orientation, the more process-oriented that community education program will be.

$H_7$ The greater the expenditure per pupil by the school district for the regular K-12 education program, the more process-oriented that district's Community Education program will be.

$H_8$ The greater overall Community Education budget for the district, the more process-oriented that Community Education program will be.

$H_9$ The greater the range of types of Community Education program offerings, the more process-oriented that program will be.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

Community Education. A concept broader in scope than the traditional concept of public education. The goals of Community Education include not only the meeting of the educational needs of school-age children but also the meeting of the recreational, social, intellectual, cultural, and health education needs of every member of the community, regardless of age, race, sex, nationality, or socio-economic circumstances. The ultimate goal is the self-actualized

community whose members are able to identify and solve important personal and community problems through the skillful use of all available human and material resources.

Community school. The major vehicle for realizing the goals of Community Education in any given community. The school facility becomes the center for involving all members of the community in programs and activities designed to alleviate both individual and community problems.

Program of Community Education. Any formal organized program or activity sponsored by a community school, in which members of the community may enroll, the purpose of which may be educational, recreational, or cultural. Programs operated in the interest of the citizens of a community are primary means of initiating the community and, as such, build interest and involvement in the community school.

Process of Community Education. The long-term, systematic development of a community's ability to identify its own problems and effectively mobilize the resources needed for their solution. Quality of this process is dependent upon the nature and extent of citizen involvement in Community Education activities. Active, skillful, and comprehensive citizen involvement is the long-term goal.

Community school advisory council. A group of interested residents who serve in an advisory capacity in helping to determine the composition of the operational program of the community school. This is a voluntary group of parents, businessmen, educators, and students representative of the community. They meet to discuss the wants and needs of their community and to make suggestions to the community school director as to the type of activities which would meet these wants and needs.

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. A private, non-profit foundation established in 1926. Based in Flint, Michigan, the Mott Foundation's primary purpose is to maintain a fund to support grants for education, health, and other benefits to individual and social growth and development. The Foundation has been a key component for national community education efforts.

## PROCEDURES

Four hundred and thirty-eight eligible Community Education programs (being in operation for more than one year and appearing in

the 1974-75 Annual Report of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation) were grouped into one of fifteen geographical locations in the United States. A maximum of seventeen districts per region were selected by using a table of random numbers, and a sample size of 239 was selected.

In February and March of 1975 surveys were sent to the sample in thirty-four different states. Of the 239 mailed out, 215 were returned for a 91.6% response.

The instrument used was a mailed questionnaire consisting of thirty-six open and closed-ended, fixed, alternative items. Items were ordered on a general to specific continuum. The first set of survey items referred to general background information on each respondent. The items then moved toward more specific information regarding the nature of the Community Education program being described as well as the philosophy of the coordinator and the philosophy of the district advisory council.

Creation of the dependent variable, the extent of process orientation, was accomplished by summing the responses to twenty-four separate indicators, using one or several survey instrument responses to measure each indicator.

The principal analysis consisted of cross-tabulation of the dependent variable with the various independent variables outlined in the hypotheses. Contingency coefficients and chi-square statistics were used to determine the strength and probability of associations between the variables as hypothesized. Statistical signficance was set at the .05 level.

## FINDINGS

Findings resulting from analysis of the data were as follows:

1. Statistically significant positive relationship between process orientation and full-time program coordinator.

2. Community Education programs which were significantly community initiated had a stronger process orientation than those programs which were initiated primarily by the local school district.

3. There was no systematic variation between population size of a Community Education program area and process orientation. Larger districts of over 40,000 people were no more likely to have strong process orientation than were districts with 15,000 or less population.

4. A curvilinear relationship existed between process orientation and length of operation of a Community Education program. Programs

started before 1968 or after 1972 showed a greater tendency to be process oriented than did those programs started between 1969 and 1972.

5. The data revealed that larger programs (nine or more school sites) are more process oriented than smaller programs (four or less sites).

6. Community Education programs with coordinators who strongly supported the process statement were considerably less likely to have a process orientation than were those programs with coordinators who only weakly supported or did not support the process statement.

7. School districts with expenditures above $950 per student were more process oriented than those districts with expenditures below $950.

8. A statistically significant relationship showed that larger budgeted Community Education programs were more process oriented than smaller budgeted programs.

9. There was no significant relationship between types of Community Education program offerings and process orientation.

10. There was a significant positive relationship between process oriented programs in general and advisory councils that were process oriented.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made:

1. Communities desiring a process oriented Community Education program should employ a full-time coordinator.

2. Programs which are initiated by the community will be more process oriented throughout their growth and development.

3. School districts which desire process orientation should involve as many community school sites as possible.

4. School districts with a greater per-pupil expenditure have more process oriented community education programs than do districts with smaller per-pupil expenditures.

5. If Community Education programs wish to have process-orientation, their overall Community Education budget must be larger.

6. There is no linear relationship between the length of time a Community Education program has been in operation and its process orientation.

7. Larger school districts are no more likely to have stronger process oriented Community Education programs than are districts of a lesser size.

8. The range of types of program offerings do not determine the extent of process orientation of a Community Education program. A strong process orientation does not necessarily mean that a Community Education program must offer an extensive program offering in order to be responsive to the community's needs.

9. The fact that the Community Education coordinator's philosophy is process oriented has little influence on whether or not the Community Education program will reflect that philosophy. There are other variables which influence program development and the coordinator's philosophy.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made by the researcher based upon the findings and conclusions:

1. That a study be conducted to determine why Community Education program started before 1968 and after 1972 were process oriented, while those Community Education programs which were started between 1969 and 1972 were not process oriented.

2. That research be directed toward investigating why the number of school sites in operation in a Community Education program would affect the process orientation of a Community Education program.

3. That further study should be made to determine why Community Education programs with coordinators with process oriented philosophies were considerably less likely to have process oriented Community Education programs.

4. That research be directed toward the importance of the advisory council function in the overall process orientation of Community Education program development.

5. That a study be conducted to determine why there was not a parallel relationship between the number of years a Community Education program had been in operation and its extent of process orientation.

## IMPLICATIONS

The conclusions have the following implications for educators:

1. Programs and activities are not, by themselves, end products of community education but rather the visable means that enable individuals in a community to collectively identify needs and systematically meet those needs with local resources.

2. Educators involved with preparing leaders of Community Education programs should use the data presented regarding the coordinator's philosophy and the actual process orientation of various districts.

3. Small school districts can have just as effective Community Education program implemented as larger districts.

4. Any sound educational program should have community input and, sometimes, agency cooperation with related groups and organizations.

5. Good two-way communication with school-community is essential for any effective process orientation of educational programs.

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